1;Griffiths M-5. (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

361 boundaries. Such boundaries exist in theory, but are not always
[796] marked out. The religious ceremonies which are supposed to take them into account just go round the outskirts of the village, paying no particular attention to supposed boundary points.

363 The ordinary Kol village is not a pretentious affair. There will be one or two central paths, three to ten feet wide and up to 200 yards long, which are the main streets and which the houses face. If the terrain permits, these paths usually run in a northerly-southerly
[364] direction and are often winding. Between the houses there are little lanes through which one may squeeze to get to the back of the village
[342] where the trash is thrown. The houses are made of *chatai* walls plastered with mud, or possibly of thick mud walls. The roof is usually of grass, but cheap country tiles are frequently employed. A two-storied house is unknown except in the larger towns where brick is used and some wealthy person resides. There is no street in the ordinary sense of the word and the lanes which provide the outlets for the
361 various houses are narrow, dirty and tortuous. The individual group may have two small buildings, one of which houses the cattle, though
[343 it is not unusual to find the cattle kept on the veranda. It is from
231] such a village that the labourers go out to their fields which not in-
[241] frequently lie from two to three miles distant from the village. On the edge of most villages are seen a few meaner huts grouped together
621 and in these one usually finds the depressed and the untouchables.
564 The fact is at once known by the pigs which are all about such houses.
735 Where Kols do not have their own village and are attached to some larger village or hamlet the two groups usually live on the edge; but the Kol, generally speaking, is more cleanly than the lower groups whose houses occasionally adjoin his dwelling place. When questioned why they live apart the answer has usually taken a three-fold form:
[262] It is claimed first that Hindus do not like to have Kols living near them because they (the Kols) eat meat and especially pork, which is consumed at the time of sacrifice. The next reason is an economic one: Kols are too poor to rent lands or pay the house rent required in the
[427] villages. One rupee a year is the maximum paid outside the village and sometimes nothing is required save a bit of help to the *malguzar* or landlord when he needs labourers in his fields. Kols also claim that if they live in close proximity to the higher castes they would not be free to sing and play the drum the whole night through, a thing which they consider necessary at certain times of worship.

184 LIVING CONDITIONS. There is a good deal of variation in the
342 conditions under which the Kols live. In places where tenancy is
351

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

basis of the black colour is soot. Sometimes this is obtained by burning certain kinds of wood and coconut shells. It is finely powdered and mixed with water. Sometimes milk from the breast is said to be a desirable solvent. After pricking, the parts are oiled with a mixture of *haldi* and *til* oil, which soothes the affected parts and removes any impurity from the touch of the tattooer.

Fig. 15

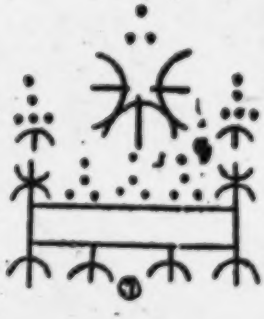

Fig. 16

AGRICULTURE. Kols mostly work as labourers in the fields of others, and even where they rent their fields, there is nothing in their methods which is not characteristic of the whole countryside. February to April is the usual slack season, although during the latter part of this period the wheat crop is harvested in Central India, and the threshing season is on. Before the rains at the end of June the ground is made ready for the first showers, and is roughly scratched with rude ploughs. Just before the rains the seed is broadcast in a prepared plot and is transplanted in the mud after the monsoon has broken. Only men sow the seed. From July to September the rice is growing and must be weeded and looked after. The weeding is generally done by women, but men also help. In October the rice is cut and threshed and stored. The soil, still moist from the monsoon rains, is now prepared for the wheat crop which is sown about the end of October or early in November. The wheat also requires weeding and care, and is ready for the harvest in late March and April. Religious observances in connection with agriculture are described in a later chapter.

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574 There is no claim of hospitality by a Kol on another Kol if he is unknown to the latter. Even though he be of the same *kurhi* and knows relatives of the persons in the family and is in need of hospitality, he can expect none; any kindness shown him is an act of mercy. For this reason it is unusual for a Kol to ask hospitality at the hands of strangers. He asks for hospitality and shelter for the night only where he is known.

421 PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE. The average Kol does not own a great deal of property, but like most people he is interested in acquiring goods. Even marriage is commonly looked upon as the acquiring of a piece of property in the person of the wife. Almost nowhere are Kols 423 found to own land in the full sense of the term. Even the land upon [427] which their houses and rude huts are built is rented, the usual rent being one rupee a year. This is paid to the *malguzar* who does not disturb them further if the payments are regular. Away from the larger towns where land so often lies waste, it is usually found that no charges are made whatsoever.

422 The personal property held by Kols includes clothes, cooking utensils, tools and a few ornaments if there is money to buy such. Animals are also considered their own property. Apart from the clothes a person wears, the rest of the goods held by the Kols are con- [425 sidered as held by the family as a unit, and the head of the family can 593] sell or exchange only after consultation with the others. Upon the approach of his death the head of the family is expected to make a 763 statement concerning the disposition and division of the property. 428 However if he should suddenly die without making such provision, it does not follow that the elder son, or next in line, inherits the rights of the father concerning the disposition of the goods, and any division or exchange must be decided upon by the family as a whole with the help of someone from the *panch*. While it appears that any member of 421 the family might purchase any article required, either for themselves or 425 for the family, yet after purchase the article becomes the property of the family as a whole, and the purchaser has no right to resell or dispose of it without permission of the head of the family in consultation with the other members.

428 Upon the break-up of the family by death the sons are generally 763 supposed to have equal rights to the property. If, prior to his death, the deceased requested that the elder son should get the larger share, this is accepted. No distinction is said to be made between the children of the "married" wife and the "kept" woman if there are both in the family.

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[P 247]

Chapter XII

LIFE STORIES OF LIVING KOLS

Sunnulal: A Kol who Stayed in his Village

I was born in the village of Kharara Ghat and was the youngest of five brothers. There were also three sisters in my family, which was a large one, as there are about fifty living relatives on my father's side alone. When I was about sixteen years of age my parents decided that I should be married and they found a girl for me in the village of Barela. My wife and I have lived happily together, and we have had two sons. My father died two years ago (in 1935). I have never had to leave Kharara Ghat in order to earn money. I have always seemed to be able to find things to do about the village and have earned enough to be well supplied with the things I need. One thing I do is to go into the forest and cut wood which I carry on my head to Jubbulpore. It is hard work, but it has to be done. My wife and sons also help out by gathering *tendu* leaves for the *biri* manufacturers. All of my five brothers live here in Barela. Together we control about fifteen acres of land which is rented from a *malguzar*. It is not all in one place, but in three or four places. We all do our share of work on this, and the income from the wheat and pulse is shared evenly by us. But all the money I make from selling wood, or grass, or *tendu* leaves I keep myself and we do not share it.

I have become one of the *panchayat* of this village and take a keen interest in the welfare of this village and our community. I would like you to put a school in our village. The nearest school is four miles away—too far for our small children to go even if we were sure they would be treated right if they were admitted. I can read a little and sign my name. I never went to school, but learned this from a man in Jubbulpore, who used to teach me after I had sold my wood. I even have bought some books.

I have no debts and do not drink any strong liquors. I have never been seriously ill, nor had any serious trouble in the family, nor have we suffered from the want of food and clothing. I have never had an accident either even though I have gone on hunting expeditions in charge of beaters. Very often some Europeans from Jubbulpore come out to our village which is close to good hunting places and I go with them and show them where they may find game.

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[595] be two wives in my house and they will always fight and quarrel, which I don't like at all. And I can only support one wife.

I have a second wife, but only one. She helps me in my daily [434] work and comes out with me into the fields and helps me dig and till the ground and together we earn about eight annas a day. At other times we work on the farm which we rent. We have about one acre and must give one-third of the produce to the *malguzar*. If the crops [241] are good we get some benefit, but if they are not it is not worth the labour. I sow my fields in pulse, wheat and *kodo*. (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*). Often we get enough to eat for the whole year from our field. For about four to six months we eat *kodo* and then for three to four months we eat wheat and in this way provide for our food. [464] This year (1937) our crops failed badly and we did not get much out of our field so we have to work as day labourers wherever we could get work. Farming brings us less return than daily coolie work, even though the latter is irregular. I have also taken a contract for a piece [429 314] of ground where lac trees grow and pay rupees five a year for the privilege of collecting the lac. The contract is for twenty years and is made with the owner of the forest in Silgnor village. I also graze my cattle there, and after deducting my animal tax I get a profit of Rs. ten or twelve per year. I don't like to work as a coolie as we are often mistreated when under the authority of one man. I prefer to take or make a contract with people who are good farmers and thus go and work in their fields according to my own free choice and desire. Thus I am saved from all kinds of mistreatments which are meted out by owners or supervisors, and this, which is true of me, is true of all members of our Kol community. We would prefer to die of hunger than to have our liberty taken away and be treated as slaves.

Once when I was very young a great crisis befell our family. [731] It was at the time when almost the whole of India suffered from a great famine (1899-1900). As my father was dead the support of the family fell upon the shoulders of my mother. Every morning and evening she used to cut grass wherever she could gather it and sell it to the people who could pay. She used to bring roots from the jungles and prepare a sort of bread for us out of them. She even brought the leaves of certain kinds of trees and made them do as vegetables in our rude food. Oh, it was a very hard time for us, but a mother's love and care saved us from that great famine. She used to work all day long; and though she seemed to be very old she worked like a young woman. Finally, after it was over she fell sick and died. She blessed us before she died. Her blessings are still with me and since then I have not suffered the want of anything. Now I have a *pakka* house.

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that amount and that the money is being used in my trade of buying and selling wood. He got very angry at me for that and took away all the wood that I had, along with my bullock cart, and brought them to Barela. He not only took these things but also paid my debt at the money-lender's and took all our jewellery which I had left as security. So we became dependent upon him again, and our condition seemed helpless. 159 426

For two years both my wife and myself had a very hard time. We had no tools to work with, nor money, nor clothes, and also no heart to work anywhere. I borrowed Rs. 2/- but that amount was all spent for food. Later we took courage and again started to sell wood. We used to go out to the jungles together and I used to carry over a *mawnd* a day to Jubbulpore, a distance of eight miles each way. But this heavy work was too much for me and I became ill. For two more years we suffered very much. Father took away all that we had and so we were again without anything. After my health was recovered I again began to sell some wood and little by little I was able to carry greater loads to the city. By the money thus earned I was able to buy a few tools and by the third year we were again independent, and these tools are still (1937) helping me to retain my self respect and earn a living for my family. 159

At present I have learned to do many kinds of work: especially the work of a mason which I prefer above the others. I also do some carpentry work when it is available. I am able, when I work, to earn from eight annas to a rupee a day, and this is enough. But if there should be a long period without work we suffer. [465]

I am still on bad terms with my father and while I am now living in Barela I am living in a separate house which I rent for eight annas a month. My sister is not yet married though she is about fourteen or fifteen years old. My first baby died when it was a month old but the next child, a son, is still living. I have only one wife. I don't want to keep two wives because they are no advantage and full of troubles. [578 427] [595]

Mandodhi: A Centenarian Kol

I belong to the Shivari family of Kols and was born in Rewa State about 100 years ago. When I was born my father was working as a serf for some farmer. When I was about 25 years old my father died, but he had left Rewa State when I was but fifteen days old. My maternal uncle brought our family to Jubbulpore where we stayed a few weeks and then started on foot to Nagpur (about 200 miles)

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Kol Tribe	Number per 1,000 earners engaged in each occupation
Artisans and other workers ..	22
Labourers, boatmen, cartmen, *palki* bearers, etc. ..	19
Trade ..	12
Domestic service ..	11
Contractors, clerks, cashiers, etc. otherwise unspecified ..	17
Labourers, unspecified ..	157
Other occupations ..	27[1]

463 177 Our own investigations show that the Kols enter into the modern economic world more easily than other primitive tribes such as the Gonds. While there are scores of Gond villages in and around Jubbulpore, the Gonds are shy and retiring and are only seen in the town on bazaar days when they come to buy and exchange some of [156] their forest produce. The Kols are not bad mixers, seem to like company, and have entered into the industrial life of the city quite readily. We did not find the Kols limited to any particular occupation. 463 They are unusually good workers and wherever we went we found this fact mentioned about them. We found a few who are farmers [427] and who hold small pieces of land from the *malguzar*. Others are farm workers and follow the crops; and during the time of the wheat harvest some Kol villages and *mahallas* are almost entirely deserted. Many of the Kols living in a town not far from Jubbulpore are road-workers, breaking the stone for the roadway and doing the required [439] labour in repairing it. Others in Barela burn and sell charcoal; some Kols buy wood from the Gonds, cut it into convenient lengths and resell it in Jubbulpore. In Khajara Ghat, a purely Kol village about eight miles from Jubbulpore and quite inaccessible and isolated, the [427] Kols seem independent, raising all their own food-stuffs and paying their *malguzari* rents by means of the proceeds from the sale of wood [276 824] and of the leaves of the *tendu* plants (*Diospyros embryopteris, melanoxylon, montana, etc.*), used in the manufacture of country cigarettes or *biris*. No one in this village was said to be engaged in hard labour [461] for others, known as coolie work. In other places we found indication that they can quite readily turn their hands to mechanical work. A few are so engaged in the factories in Jubbulpore. We watched Kols

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

prepare tiles in a workshop near Deori; a Barela Kol has taken up the work of a mason and bricklayer. In another family we found that members had been jungle postal-runners for three generations. In Sihora they said that their chief occupation was digging in the fields, though they also cut wood and sold grass; only one or two rented lands. At Katni we found that they were chiefly employed in the cement works, but would soon be going elsewhere, as the cement factories were in the process of closing down. In some of the villages about Katni they were found to be mostly labourers in the surrounding fields. At Kymore thousands are employed in the great cement factories; at Maihar they are mostly engaged in lime-kiln work. Near Rewa City they seem to be mostly serfs and labourers. Further north they grind sandstone for the glass works, and at Chunar in the United Provinces help to dig the rock out of the hillsides. We found a few literate Kols in Katni who had learned to read in the Church Mission School. One of these was a clerk in a warehouse at busy times of the year; the rest of the year he would do whatever he could find which often was nothing but coolie work.

THE SITUATION IN THE VILLAGES: *Land and Income*. In our visits to numerous villages we made enquiries as to the economic situation on the part of the Kols living there. A careful survey was made near Jubbulpore. Text figure 30 shows the area. Only a few Kols in the large group at Barela actually rent lands for farming purposes; either on shares or on straight rent. In Kharara Ghat the situation seems to be the opposite, for nearly every household there holds land from the *malguzar*. Money is earned on the side from the sale of wood, grass and *tendu* leaves for *biris*. In Barela a survey of thirty-nine families indicated that only three held lands, and that the total acreage so held was but 5¼ acres. Thirty families in Kharara Ghat hold 82 acres of land; in some cases taxes for the same are paid direct to the Government, while to the *malguzar* they say they pay Rs. 10 per *khandi* of wheat sown, this being considered as 1/3 the produce of the land.

Barela Kols do most of the coolie work on the roads near that place and also labour on the farms as occasion offers. All the able members of the family work and we found that on the average the family income was Rs. ten to twelve per month for this type of labour. One dealer in charcoal said that he cleared locally in Barela about Rs. 120 per year. Another Barela Kol has the custom of purchasing wood from the Gonds who bring it down from the hills near-by. This is bought for five pice, is then cut up into shorter lengths by himself

34 [text continues on middle of p. 264]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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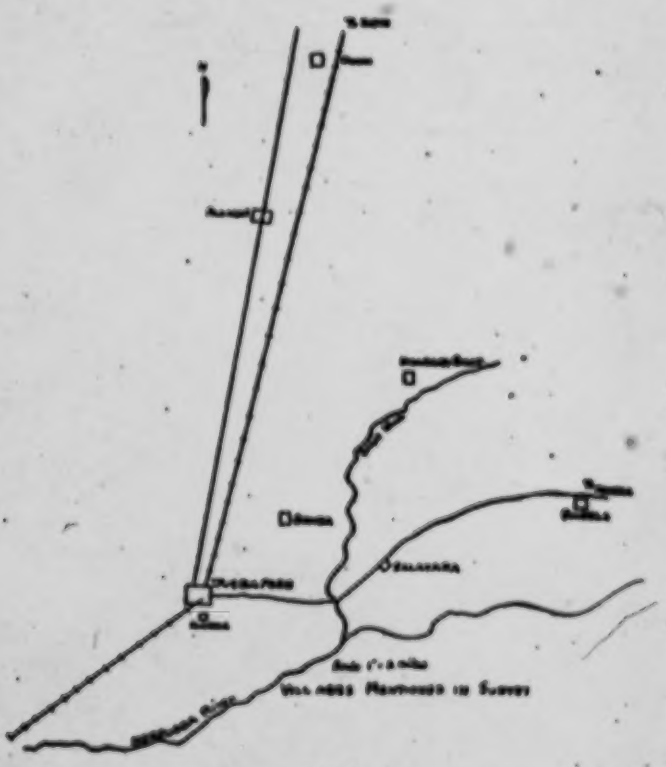

Fig. 30.

464 and family and is resold for ten pice, just double the amount he paid
434 for it. Another Kol, acquainted with brick-laying and general re-
[434] pairing, earns twelve annas per day when work is available. A few
in Bareia deal in *tendu* leaves and sell the same to contractors from
[556] Jubbulpore. There was only one Kol in Bareia whom the other Kols
considered wealthy. "Wealthy" was defined as the possession of
ornaments, animals, and some money. The rent for land about Bareia
[427] varies considerably as it is not all of equal value. Two Kols, however,
were paying at the rate of Rs. 4-10-0 per acre.

333 At Deori we found that the Kol colony was mostly employed in
464 the tile factory where they are paid by piece work and receive
434

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Rs. 4-8-0 per 1,000 tiles molded and put on the rack to harden. They told us that the average Kol worker would mold about 1,000 tiles per week.

In Panagar there are about 100 families of Kols. Some of them keep chickens and sell the few eggs they get in the local bazaar, or even take them to Jubbulpore on market days. Three or four own bullock carts. The rest of the community divide their time between working on the roads and doing coolie work in the fields when such work is available. This brings them from two to three annas per day. This work is far from steady, being largely seasonal.

In Benda village there are fifteen houses of Kols. Their main work is breaking stone for the metalled roads and preparing limestone for the kilns. They believe that by steady work they can make up to Rs. three per week, but the work is very hard and the hours are long. A few collect *tendu* leaves in season and when other work is slack they go out to the jungles and cut wood. They can earn from three to three and a half annas per day in that way. None of the Benda Kols does any farming.

At Salavara village on the Gaur River, we found that all were engaged in breaking stones for road metal. Their report seemed to indicate that they had to work harder for what they got than some other groups. They said it took them fifteen days to break a *saikara*—a stone measuring approximately 1,000 cubic feet—that two men were required and that they received Rs. 2-8-0 for the *saikara*. Five years ago, they said, they got Rs. 4/- for the same measure. They claim that the work is also harder now as they have to go further for suitable rock.

At Garha close to Jubbulpore, there is a fair-sized Kol community. The village is quite distinct from any other place and about 100 Kol families dwell there. Their occupations are various, and but few have steady work. This group consists mostly of coolies who get work wherever it is available or where the best wages are offered. Sawing wood is a common opening as they do not live far from the timber yards where all the sawing of planks is done by hand. During the wheat harvest they are nearly all away in the fields, leaving their houses empty for the few weeks of the harvesting season.

On a preliminary visit to Rewa State we went to a small Kol community not far from Rewa City. These Kols have considerable land for which they pay rental to a Mahratta landlord. What this group told us has been confirmed by many others, both in and out of Rewa State and seems to characterize the conditions of the Kols there. One informant told us that he was married about twelve years pre-

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

231 422 families in Kharara Ghat owned neither goats nor cattle. If cattle are allowed to graze in the reserve forests the yearly payment is twelve annas for a bullock or a cow and six to eight annas for a goat. Young animals may graze without payment.

In Panagar and Deori chickens are the common possession and there are but a few who have goats and cattle. At Benda, with 15 houses of Kols, there are six head of cattle and five goats. They cannot raise chickens there as they are plagued with cats, both domestic and [778] from the jungle, which makes this impossible. Cats are regarded as sacred animals and are called "mothers" and may not be killed[1]. The villages which are largely made up of people employed in industrial enterprises are found to have few animals. The more agricultural type of village has more cattle; but those who consider that they are here today and gone tomorrow do not have many animals. In the Kol *mahallas* about Jubbulpore the number of cattle is not large. Nowhere did we find a Kol who owned a horse. As was seen[2] they have a [784] tradition that causes them to consider a horse something that should not be touched.

● 427 651 *Taxes.* Direct taxes are paid by very few Kols, for unless he actually owns his land the taxes are not paid directly. Those who take land on shares from the *malguzar* pay him one-third of the crop as his rent; in other cases a certain sum per *khandi* of seed sown is agreed upon. Some Kols about Barela told us they paid seven rupees for 1¼ acres of *malguzari* land and another of the same place fourteen rupees for three acres of the same. The houses in which the Kols of Barela live are built on *malguzari* land. When a new house is put up they pay the *malguzar* two to three rupees depending on the size of the house and report that subsequently no further land rent is asked for. As long as the buildings are occupied by that man, and kept in good repair the land on which it stands can be controlled by the builder. 651 In other places there seems to be a yearly tax for houses; on the municipal land in Jubbulpore it was two rupees per house per year; at Garha, near the edge of Jubbulpore town limits the landowner asked one rupee per house per year. This amount seems to be the general rate or tax to *malguzars* for the houses or huts in which they live. In [HCC] the industrial settlements they are given rent-free land on which they may erect their huts when they live on the property of the company employing them.

1 See page 198.
2 See pages 34-35; 210, 211.